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## HIGH-SCHOOL LATIN AND THE COLLEGE-ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS<sup>1</sup>

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I am not under the delusion that I am suggesting a new subject for your consideration. In fact, for the past twenty years or more there have been no subjects more frequently discussed than the content and scope of secondary education and the articulation of the high schools and the colleges; and no subjects seem harder to settle. No sooner has a learned commission exalted the valleys and made the rough places plain than trouble breaks out in a new quarter, and another commission is appointed only to fail in turn. On the one hand the colleges are blamed for imposing arbitrary standards of attainment and for making entrance requirements which tend to cripple and limit the effectiveness of the high schools; on the other, the high schools are charged with being slow to respond to the popular demand and with being under the domination of the colleges.

There are probably some who long for the peaceful days of yore when such questions had either not been asked or were considered bad form, when the high school was considered the child of the university to which it gave glad and obedient service. But those days have gone never to return, and through all the toil and moil of the discussions of recent years we have seen a steadily growing recognition of the truth that the business of the high school is to fit for life, and that the best preparation for life is the best preparation for college. And the discussions and restlessness will continue no doubt until stable equilibrium is found which shall lie somewhere between the conservatism of past tradition and the too radical assumptions of modern educational demagogues.

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the Classical Conference of the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club, April 2, 1914.

Now inasmuch as all subjects taught in the secondary school have come in for their share in the disturbance, Latin has not escaped. Important modifications in the Latin curriculum resulted from the work of the famous Committee of Ten in 1893. This was followed in 1899 by the Report of the Committee of Twelve of the American Philological Association. And in 1909 we had the Report of the Commission on College Entrance Requirements in Latin. As this Commission was appointed by the American Philological Association at the request of the largest classical associations in the country and was made up of leading representatives from those associations, its report created much interest and discussion, was widely recognized as authoritative, and has led to important changes in high-school curricula and college-entrance requirements. I think many of us heaved a sigh of relief when this report appeared and hoped that at last the hydra was slain, a hope which, I must confess in my own case, was cherished rather *in spite of* than *because of* certain of the requirements recommended by the Commission—requirements, too, that seemed in part utterly at variance with the following words of the report itself: "The Commission feels that it is wise to open the way for a wider range of reading and that the schools should have the right to select the material to be read, the colleges contenting themselves with evidence that the reading has been so done as to furnish the right sort of training and the necessary preparation for their work." Some misgiving, too, arose in my mind when Dr. Kirtland, chairman of the Commission, stated in the *Classical Journal* for April, 1910, in an article on "The Report of the Commission," that in the deliberations where there was a material difference of opinion the majority in every case relinquished its prerogative and the proceedings were governed by the tacit understanding that no vote should be regarded as passed unless every member had signified his approval of it. This method, I infer, accounts for some unfortunate features of the report where the wiser majority evidently felt obliged to yield and compromise with an obstinate minority or even a refractory individual. For in a commission of fifteen men such an individual is almost sure to be found. In a subsequent article in the same journal (June, 1910) Dr. Kirtland seems himself to voice

a feeling of doubt about the report when he says, "I have found a rather strong feeling that we should have made a more radical departure from the traditional requirement." And he shows an amazing ignorance of the real situation when he says, "There is no indication that the majority of schools of the country are not content to stay in the rut of the traditional reading," a point to which I will return later.

The unfortunate fact that the report of this Commission has settled nothing, in spite of all our hopes and expectations, is now made clear by recent steps taken by the National Education Association. In 1911 a committee on the articulation of high school and college made a report recommending the liberalizing of college-entrance requirements so that the completion of any well-planned high-school course should be accepted as a preparation for college. This report was widely scattered and is being approved by an increasing number of educational associations, colleges, and state boards. In 1912 this same committee recommended the appointment of subcommittees to report upon the reorganization of the various high-school subjects. These subcommittees were appointed the same year, and in 1913 they were formally constituted a commission by the board of directors of the National Education Association. Among other results to be secured by this commission are named:

1. Formulation of aims, efficient methods, and kinds of material whereby each subject may best serve the needs of high-school pupils.
2. College-entrance recognition for courses that meet the actual needs of high-school pupils.

The several subcommittees comprising the commission have already made substantial progress, and a bulletin was issued a few weeks ago by the United States Bureau of Education containing preliminary reports by the respective chairmen of the subcommittees.

The chairman of the Committee on Ancient Languages is Dr. Walter E. Foster, of the Stuyvesant High School, New York. While expressing profound faith in Latin as not only one of the most effective educational instruments for general culture, but also as one of the most practical subjects in the curricula of the secondary schools, he makes unmistakably clear his opinion of the work of

all previous commissions, and his appreciation of the threatening character of the present situation in the following words:

In content, scope, and method the courses in Latin must be adapted to the ability and to the interests of children. We have been too busy trying to fit the children to the subject, rather than the subject to the children. Speaking broadly, in shaping our courses in Latin in secondary schools, we have approached our problem with college-entrance requirements and the interests of Latin chiefly in mind. Some of the tenderest-hearted of our guild have padded and smoothed the Procrustean bed a little here and there, but it is the same old bed upon which we force our victims to lie. If the subjects of our ministrations writhe and groan, we take their sufferings as evidence that our methods are effective, fortifying ourselves with the assurance that Latin is a "disciplinary" subject, and that "all chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous, yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby." We have set an arbitrary standard of attainment and have selected our subject-matter with an almost incredible indifference to the psychology of adolescent girlhood and boyhood. . . . That the time is ripe for reformation, if not for revolution, few deny. The responsibility rests with the Latin teachers whether it be a reformation or a revolution. . . . If there is not a considerable number of people that wish their children to study a subject, very soon that subject will cease to be taught in our public high schools. In these democratic institutions every subject must stand or fall on its merits. The fate of Latin lies in our own hands.

There is no doubt in my own mind that Dr. Foster is correct in declaring that there is an insistent demand for changes which, if unheeded, will lead to revolution; and that Dr. Kirtland is wrong in his assertion, quoted above, that there is no indication that the majority of schools of the country are not content to stay in the rut of the traditional reading. It seems pertinent to ask what led Dr. Kirtland to such a belief and whether the Commission of which he is chairman made inquiries and secured data to support its faith in the existence of this calm of contentment. I feel sure that no adequate inquiries were made and that, if they had been made, the assumption of contentment would have proved as unsubstantial and unreal as the shade of Creusa in the arms of Aeneas. Some two years ago Mr. Cheever Hoyt, who was then teaching Latin in Little Rock, Arkansas, was asked by the State Board of Education to head a committee having for its purpose the revision of the course in high-school Latin. To assist the committee in its

work, Mr. Hoyt sent questions to more than a hundred classical teachers in various parts of the country representing universities, colleges, and high schools. The question involved the status and sentiment concerning the existing Latin courses in high schools. In all cases the great majority of answers showed great discontent with existing courses and a desire for changes. And all the changes desired lay in the direction of greater freedom and the emancipation from having to meet existing college-entrance requirements. And on the question whether or not the Latin courses in high schools should be made to conform to these requirements in spite of popular demands and local conditions, it is a noteworthy fact that college men themselves were frank in their declaration that high schools should be untrammelled in serving their communities, and that the needs of those not going to college should have first consideration. In this disposition on the part of college men, I see the promise of better days to come.

Admitting, as I think we must, serious dissatisfaction with some features of the college-entrance requirements as formulated by the Commission of 1909, it is only fair to admit that in at least two particulars its work has won unqualified approval. These are, first, the great reduction in the amount of prescribed reading, and, second, the increased stress laid upon translation at sight by making the passing of a test in this of equal importance with the ability to translate from the prescribed reading. These recommendations will, no doubt, lead to greater freedom in the choice of reading-matter and will tend to lay proper emphasis upon the attainment of a practical mastery of the language. I think we would all agree with Dr. Kirtland when he says, "The ability to translate into idiomatic English a new piece of Latin gives evidence of an adequate preparation for the Freshman Latin courses of the colleges and of mental power and mental discipline."<sup>1</sup> In these two important particulars, then, the Commission did well and deserves our thanks. But where we find ourselves at variance with its findings is in the selection of authors and works from which the reading specified must be done, and in the inhibition that only schools which read more than the required amount will be free to go beyond these bounds. Here

<sup>1</sup> *Classical Journal*, April, 1910.

is where the trouble begins and here is where it will continue until college-entrance requirements are made broad enough to satisfy the demands and conditions of the schools. Let us now examine in some detail what reading-matter is specified for the several years of the high-school course.

In the second year the amount of reading is to be no less than Caesar's *Gallic War*, i-iv, and is to be selected from Caesar's *Gallic War*, Caesar's *Civil War*, and Nepos' *Lives*. I do not think that any serious objection is made to the amount of reading. It is not too much, *if properly selected*. But what has aroused the greatest storm of protest is that the selection of the reading is limited to Caesar and Nepos. And right here I wish to say—and I say it boldly and without fear of successful contradiction—that the work of the second year will never be on a satisfactory basis as long as Caesar dominates it. The Commission was no doubt well aware of the rebellion against Caesar, for it is notorious enough, but seems to have believed that a satisfactory solution was offered by permitting the reading of the *Civil War* instead of the *Gallic War*. But, unfortunately, the objections to the *Gallic War* apply with equal and, in my judgment, with even greater force to the *Civil War*. And what makes matters even worse is that too often the first year is so strongly flavored with Caesar that instead of one year of Caesar, which is bad enough, there are two, and the pupil who does not go beyond the second year might easily be led to infer that Caesar was the only great Roman and that his *Commentaries* are the only great works in Roman literature.

In my own judgment the most drastic changes need to be made right here in the second year, and chiefly for the reason that the vast majority of pupils studying Latin do not go beyond the second year. Of every one hundred pupils beginning Latin not over twenty-five continue the subject four years and but four out of one hundred, according to reliable statistics, continue Latin in college. What we need, then, is a two-year Latin course so rich and full, so vital and interesting that it will be altogether worth while for the great army that does not go beyond. If we had such a course, I venture to say that more than twenty-five out of one hundred would finish four years of Latin and more than four in

each one hundred would continue the subject in college. Such a course cannot be made from Caesar and Nepos alone, much less from Caesar alone. And even if Caesar were all that is desirable, were not too difficult, too monotonous, too void of literary inspiration, too remote from the interest of children, even then it would not be best to spend a whole year on one author. Some of you may remember that the Committee of Ten (1893) recommended, or at least permitted, the entire elimination of Caesar, and Caesar protagonists are prone to ask, why, when the opportunity was given, Caesar was not more generally deserted. Several reasons may be given for this: first and foremost, the colleges did not heartily indorse the plan, and accepted substitutes for Caesar with considerable reluctance. This was enough to prevent many departures from the beaten track. Another reason is that teachers trying Nepos instead of Caesar found that the *Lives* possess for young pupils difficulties of their own, making them scarcely more suitable than the *Gallic War*. Again, the available second-year Latin books that were intended to provide a suitable variety of reading-matter were not always happy in their selection of material and in the grading and presentation of it. Finally, at that time most of our colleges were demanding four years of Latin for entrance and there was less call and less need for a two-year course which should be more or less complete in itself. The conditions today are vastly different. Dr. Foster in the preliminary report, to which reference was made above, has expressed a widely prevailing sentiment when he says, "In planning the work of the first two years at least, one should but vaguely remember, if not entirely forget, that there are college-entrance requirements." In view of present conditions, it seems strange that the Commission of 1909 should have been so much less liberal than the Committee of Ten in 1893 and than the Committee of Twelve in 1899 who assigned for the second year "selections from Caesar's *Gallic War* equivalent in amount to four or five books; selections from other prose writers such as Nepos may be taken as a substitute for one, or at most two, books." And in commenting on this part of the course the Committee report says, "Many teachers favor Nepos for easy reading just before Caesar or in place of part of the *Commentaries*. Selections

from Eutropius, Florus, and the Fables may, of course, be employed, or the useful 'made Latin' of Lhomond's *Viri Romae*. They may all be made to serve the one purpose; and while uniformity may appear desirable at this point, it is by no means essential." It is a source of profound regret that the Commission of 1909 did not act with equal liberality. As it is, many important schools, in spite of or because of the present limitations, are giving courses that their convictions or their local conditions demand. Professor M. A. Leiper of Bowling Green, Kentucky, in a thoughtful and temperate article in the *Classical Journal* for March, 1912, after calling attention to the need of giving pupils that study Latin, even but two years, at least a slight acquaintance with the classical masterpieces of Roman literature, gives the following as a tentative outline of Latin reading for the second year's work. This course presupposes the reading of simple Latin passages for three weeks or a month at the close of the first year's work.

Second Year of Latin	Nepos	{	Hannibal
			Themistocles
			Cato
	Caesar	{	Book i, chap. 1, Geography of Gaul
			Book iv, chaps. 20-36, First Invasion of Britain
			Book v, chaps. 1-23, Second Invasion of Britain
			Book iv, chaps. 1-19, First Invasion of Germany
			Book vi, chaps. 9-29, Second Invasion of Germany
	500 lines taken from other authors of prose and verse such as		
	Curtius, Catullus, Cicero, Livy, Horace, Ovid, and Vergil.		

This course totals four hundred lines less than the number of lines in the first four books of Caesar and this subtraction is made to allow for the extra time and effort required in attacking matter from new authors. The course as outlined above has been used by Professor Leiper for several years, and he declares himself thoroughly well pleased with its results.

Professor A. T. Walker in a recent article<sup>1</sup> says, "No teacher of Latin really believes that second-year Latin is taught primarily for its subject-matter. . . . In fact, the knowledge of the subject-matter, whatever the author read, is among the least important of

<sup>1</sup> *Classical Journal*, March, 1912.

things which the pupil will carry away from his second year of Latin." I admit that there are other rewards that may be as important as the subject-matter, and, when Caesar is the sole author, I agree with Professor Walker as to the relative unimportance of the subject-matter in the second year. But what about the subject-matter when a gifted teacher gives such a course as that outlined above, and what becomes of chief value to the pupil under such instruction! May it not be the subject-matter?

Another very interesting two-year course is that given by Mr. Albert S. Perkins, of the Dorchester, Massachusetts, High School. His school has an enrolment of 1,850 pupils and more than half of them are on a commercial course and are taking, at their own request, two years of Latin as a foundation-study for the improvement and strengthening of English. Mr. Perkins lays great stress upon comparative word-study and grammar to further this end, and, in addition to parts of Caesar, reads with them a little Ovid and several hundred lines of Vergil. And that the tendency toward greater elasticity is as wide as the nation—as far as from Massachusetts to Washington—is shown by the recent revision of the Latin courses in the high schools of Seattle.<sup>1</sup> In their revision, to use the wording of the Committee, "the study of Latin in the light of twentieth-century needs, particularly in reference to citizenship and social responsibility, has constantly been kept in mind." In these schools the first weeks of the second year are spent on easy reading-matter, and only twenty-nine chapters of Caesar (with modification of difficult passages) are read in the first semester. During the second semester interesting selections from the *Gallic War* are assigned, amounting in all to about fifty pages of text.

I wonder what the Latin teachers in colleges and universities that have accepted the Commission's definition of college-entrance requirements will do when candidates present themselves who have prepared for college under the more liberal conditions. If they are the sensible men we believe them to be, such candidates will be admitted without question, if they show that they know as much Latin as they ought to know, whether they have bowed at

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, March, 1913, p. 266.

Caesar's shrine or not. And when the next revision of the college-entrance requirements appears—and its coming is already casting its shadow before—I believe that for the second year the definition of the work and its testing will read substantially as follows: "In the second year the amount of reading required of candidates for admission shall be not less than Caesar, *Gallic War*, i-iv, without prescription of particular authors or works, the selection of the reading-matter being left to the schools. Colleges that accept two years of Latin for admission will test candidates on their ability to translate at sight simple passages in prose."

Time will permit but a brief discussion of the requirements formulated for the third year and for the fourth, and these are more in accord with universal practice and belief. For these years the amount of reading, as required by the Commission, shall be not less than Cicero, the orations against Catiline, for the Manilian Law, and for Archias; Vergil, *Aeneid* i-vi; and shall be selected from Cicero, orations, letters, and *De senectute*; Sallust, *Catiline* and *Jugurthine War*; Vergil, *Bucolics*, *Georgics*, and *Aeneid*, and Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, and *Tristia*.

Cicero is so versatile and fascinating a writer that there is no difficulty in planning an attractive course for the third year from his writings alone. The Commission did well, I think, in prescribing for examination only the orations for the Manilian Law and for Archias, leaving the teacher free to choose and diversify the major part of the course. There seems to be a tendency on the part of schools to omit the second and fourth Catilinarian orations in favor of other orations, the *Letters* or Sallust's *Conspiracy of Catiline*. My own conviction is strongly in favor of reading at least selections from Sallust's *Catiline* in connection with Cicero's Catilinarian orations. As for Cicero's letters, students, as a rule, find them more difficult to translate than the orations, and they involve a much wider knowledge of political and social conditions at Rome than high-school pupils possess. My own feeling is that more profit would be obtained from reading more orations, especially the Marcellus, the Roscius, the Ligarius, and the King Deiotarus. To be encouraged, too, is the disposition to read parts of the *De senectute* and *De amicitia*. But why, may I ask, did the Com-

mission admit the former and omit the latter? Possibly the *De amicitia* is somewhat more difficult than the *De senectute*, but there are plenty of passages in *De amicitia* that the pupils could read with ease and unalloyed delight.

As for the poetry, as the prescribed reading includes only three books of the *Aeneid*, the teacher is apparently left with considerable freedom. Practically, however, his choice is not apt to go beyond Vergil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Few will find the *Bucolics* adapted to their needs and still fewer the *Georgics*. As regards Ovid's *Fasti* and *Tristia*, a few will read selections from the former and probably more from the latter. But why did it seem necessary to the Commission to limit the reading to the works of two poets? Remembering that the high school is the people's university and that only four out of every hundred beginning Latin in the high school will ever read a line of it in college, why would it not have been wiser and better in every way to limit the prescribed reading, as it is now, to Books i, ii, iv, or vi of Vergil, but for the rest of the required amount allow the schools to read from any poet they might choose? Why not give the Seniors in the high school a taste of Horace, something from Catullus, and now and then a Latin comedy? Do we college men wish to keep these good things away from the twenty-five high-school Seniors for the selfish benefit of the four who will take Latin in college? There is plenty of reading material in these so-called college authors that is quite as easy to translate and as easy to comprehend as anything in Vergil or Ovid.

In conclusion, I wish to repeat the words of Dr. Foster quoted above: "The time is ripe for a reformation, if not for a revolution. The responsibility rests with the Latin teachers, whether it be a reformation or revolution." And, I wish to add, it rests with the high-school teachers rather than with the college professors. The high-school teacher is nearer to the people, he knows what they want and how well or how ill the high school is meeting the public want. It is his business to connect the high school with the vital forces of the community, and, if he is a Latin teacher, he must make such a course as will appeal to that community as something eminently practical, sane, and useful. But what about the college-

entrance requirements? Forget them! I doubt if any popular reform in education has ever begun in a college or university. It has been forced upon the college or university by pressure from below. It will be so in this case. I urge you, high-school teachers of Latin, to offer such courses as will meet the local demand and the best interests of the community where you dwell. If the courses don't meet the college-entrance requirements, so much the worse for the requirements. The greater interest will have to yield to the lesser and what is best for the high school will have to be best for the college. After all, the *vital* question and the *only* question that a college has a right to ask a candidate for admission is, "Do you know enough Latin to enter the Freshman class?" May the time soon come when, standing on that broad ground, the college will ask only that question and say to every worthy candidate no matter how or where prepared: "Tros Tyriusque mihi nullo discrimine agetur."